

THE CASTAWAY.

By the Writer of "The Man with the Seven Hearts."

The writer of "The Man with the Seven Hearts," while musing over the meaning of his own story, saw an old man coming towards him, white-haired, and leaning on a stick; and he thought, "Here is one who has travelled far, and seen the doings of men, and known their evil and their good. I will read my story to him, and he shall explain it to me."

So he called the old man, and said, "I have here a story, and I do not know the meaning. If you will, I will read it you, and you shall tell me."

"Who wrote the story?" asked the old man.

"I did," replied the writer.

"No one can tell his own meaning," said the man. "No one can fathom his own thought. No one can see the end of the lines on which his words begin their course. I have travelled over Europe, and over older Europe, and have heard the Russian, and the Brahman, and the gipsy telling tales at the corners of the streets to those that pass by. But who knew the meaning?"

"But where is older Europe?" I asked.

"Asia," said he. "But begin your story."

So I read him "The Man with the Seven Hearts," and when it was finished I said,

"Tell me the meaning, and tell me if the story is new, or if I have heard it from another."

"The story is not new," he said. "It is no more yours than the air and the sunlight. It is no more yours than is the story of 'The Castaway.' It belongs to all."

"What is the story of 'The Castaway'?" I asked, and I forgot my desire to learn the meaning of my own story.

So he told it me.

There was once in a quiet village, seven times farther than the seven countries and farther still, a man of about forty years of age, who was the pride and comfort of all with whom he had to do. When he had come there first, ten years before, he had found everything tumble-down and in confusion, and the priest was overworked and poor. But the man brought with him money, and clever hands, and quick, quiet ways, so that in very little time the roofs through which the rain came were thatched and dry, and the floors through which the ooze came were re-tiled, and flowers grew in wooden window-boxes, and roads were swept, and fields were drained. And whenever the man went away for a month or two he would come back with something new, and useful, and beautiful—a painted window for the church, or a set of books for the children, or patterns for the village wood-carvers, or clocks for the village mantelshelves; and the priest and the villagers naturally blessed the day which had sent the man to them. And they built him a house, and in it were curious things brought from all the corners of the earth.

But on a day there came to the village three Memories dressed all in grey, and they asked for the man's house, and when they saw it they knocked at the door and entered. And they found the man among his books.

"We have come far to find you," they said. "Who would have thought that you would hide yourself in a village seven times farther than the seven countries, and farther still?"

"I have not hidden myself," said the man. "I have come here in the course of my travels. And I do not know you. Why have you come to me?"

"You will know us soon," they said. "And we have come to you to stay with you and be your servants."

"I will not have you for my servants," said the man. "You cannot help yourself," said the first. "Do you remember that when you were quite a young man you lived in a small town upon the Danube, and prospered and prospered till they gave into your hands the care of the savings of the poor? You passed for a good man then, but in secret you tossed others' money to the four winds over the cards. And do you remember how some said you had lost it on a journey, and

others said it had never been paid you ; and quarrels arose, and though your friends upheld you, the money was gone ; and you left that village, and the poor had to set to work again early and late with little faith in man ? ”

“ I have forgotten it,” said he.

“ But I have remembered it,” said the shadow.

“ And,” said the second, raising her arm, “ do you remember when you left that place your good fortune followed you and you were established in another town, and you found there a girl and her betrothed ? And your good fortune went with you in this too, for the girl had no longer any thought for the man to whom her parents had promised her, and only thought of you. And your hearts were set on one another ? ”

The man knitted his brows.

“ I *do* remember that,” he said. “ I fought against it. She fought against it. Can you blame me for that ? ”

“ I blamed you not,” said the shadow. “ Listen. And one evening when you and he were walking over a tottering plank above the waterfall, he slipped and fell and clutched the plank. And you watched him hang there for ten seconds till his hands loosed their hold and he was drowned.”

“ And,” said the third, stepping forward, “ you married that girl, and your life was all happiness, until, one day, a merchant came from your old village with proofs of your old fraud, and denounced you in your house and to your wife. And she who had believed in you died, loving you still, and the child died with her and within her.”

“ I have forgotten all,” said the man, “ except the girl and my life with her.”

“ But I have remembered it,” said the Memory.

And the three stood silent before him.

“ Why have you come ? ” he asked, wearily.

“ To be your servants,” they said, “ and to tell the people here.”

“ They will not believe you,” said the man.

But on the next day, which was the Sunday, when all the village was in the church and the priest had finished talking to the people, there stood forward the three in grey and told their tale. And the priest tried to stop them, but they waved their hands for silence.

“ You have come to ruin my parish,” cried the priest. “ You

have come to take our friend away ; and we do not believe you. Drive them from the church.”

“ Stay,” said the man, standing in his place. “ Stay ! I begin to remember. It is all true.”

But one of the villagers, who had once accompanied the man on one of his travels, rose and cried to the shadows,

“ Do you remember, you vile things ; do you remember the year he came to the village ? It was a rack and tumble, up and down, twisty, crockety place (they used strange terms, the villagers) ; who made it clean and bright and sweet ? And when I went with him, who helped the beggars on the road ? who saved the little girl from the new steam-beast ? who taught the Lagpal people how to dock the river and stop the flood ? who cured the tax-collector’s son of fever, and sat up all night with him ? Tell them,” he said, turning to the man, who sat still with his face in his hands ; “ tell them who did all this ? ”

“ I do not remember,” said the man. “ Surely it was not I.”

“ We have never heard,” said the shadows, “ or if we have, we have forgotten.”

“ But *we* have heard,” cried the whole church, “ and *we* remember. Drive the shadows from the holy place.” And they chased them through the streets.

But when the man got home the three were there still. And he began to bargain with them.

“ It is not our fault,” they said. “ We did not wish to come.”

“ Who then can rid me of you ? ” cried the man. “ Can God ? ”

“ No, God cannot help you. Stay—He can. He can take your memory from you. You will then forget all the good and evil of your life. You will forget your childhood and your mother. You will have no memory also of the girl and of your life with her. Shall we go and ask Him to grant you that ? ”

“ No,” said the man, “ stay where you are.”

That very night, when all the village was still, the man gathered a few things together and put them in a bundle, and stole away while the shadows slept ; and he went far back through the seven countries, and again became a wanderer on the earth.

And the shadows took possession of the house and of all that he had, and haunted it until the time came when they should follow him and find him.

And the village prospered, and memories of the man's good deeds came and lived with the priest, and helped him in his work.

Now, when the story was finishing I had bowed my head upon my hands in pity of the Castaway, and when I looked up I was alone.

‘ DER BÜCHERBUND.’

BY ELSA D'ESTERRE-KEELING.

XII.

LUTHER: HIS PREDECESSORS, CONTEMPORARIES, AND SUCCESSORS.

It has been pointed out* that no sooner did prose make its appearance in German literature than a demand was made for literature more edifying than the mere tale. Preachers were called upon to provide, not only for listeners, but for readers. Master *Eckhart*, a good monk of *Augsburg* in the early fourteenth century, having won distinction for himself as doctor of theology, as preacher and teacher, in Paris, Cologne, and Strassburg, was of those who spoke and wrote. Among his disciples was *John Tauler*, of Strassburg, one of the most mystical of preachers in an age of mysticism. His beautiful book, *How to Follow the Poor Life of Christ*, is still read. Here is a quaint bit from one of his sermons.†

Man findet Leute, die haben also viele wunderliche Anfectungen und Bekümmernisse, gleich als ob der Rhein durch sie flösse, derothalben sie nimmermehr Stille oder Ruhe in ihrem Herzen haben können; denn, geben sie sich zu Zeiten auswendig zu Ruhe, und wollten gern stille sein, so haben sie doch inwendig so viele Gedanken und Bekümmernisse wie ein Baum, der voller Blätter in dem Winde steht und nicht still sein kann.

We find people that have such wondrous strife and struggling, 'tis just as if the Rhine were flowing through them, wherefore they never may have calm or quiet in their hearts; for, though they lay themselves outwardly to rest betimes, and would fain be still, yet inwardly they have so many troublous thoughts, 'tis like a tree that standeth in the wind, full of leaves, and may not be quiet.

Tender and quaint as *Tauler* is *Geiler von Kaisersberg*, a preacher of the Reformation days, who preceded Luther to the grave. He it was who likened a good Christian to a *Häsllein*

* Bücherbund X:

† The German is somewhat modernised.